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ABSTRACT

Using Take Home Stories is one method of providing success-oriented independent reading materials to reinforce basic vocabulary from any reading program. Most easy-to-read trade books have too many words that are not in the beginning reader's reading vocabulary. Take Home Stories can be written to be used after completion of an entire basal reader, after a unit within a reader, or after specific stories or lessons. Two criteria need to be employed when writing Take Home Stories: only the vocabulary that students have been taught may be used and all of the new vocabulary for a particular lesson should be included. Because they are inexpensive, consumable, and contain the exact reading vocabulary learned in the basal program, the stories are an ideal tool for parents to use in helping children at home. A variety of activities can be used with the stories including word recognition and meaning, word analysis, recalling details, locating answers, visual memory, sequence of events, drawing conclusions, finding the main idea, and using context clues. (TJ)

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CONSTRUCTING AND USING TAKE HOME STORIES IN THE BASIC READING PROGRAM

By Nancy G. Whisler

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Children at the initial stages of reading instruction love to read aloud. They are usually quite anxious and willing to share their newly acquired success in reading with their families. If teachers and parents could capitalize on this pride, enthusiasm, and desire to read in materials in which success will be experienced, those beginning readers would be further along the road toward accomplishing the basic goals of reading instruction, namely reading independently and for enjoyment.

The focus of this paper is on Take Home Stories (5), one method of providing success oriented independent reading materials to reinforce basic vocabulary from any reading program. An actual size sample is on the next page. Problems inherent in frequently used easy-to-read books and other reading materials assigned for independent reading are discussed. Guidelines for writing and assembling Take Home Stories are given. Instructional suggestions are offered on ways parents or teachers can use Take Home Stories to reinforce a number of reading skills.

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PROBLEMS INHERENT IN EASY-TO-READ MATERIALS

Narrator: The scene is in a typical first grade classroom. The teacher has just completed a lesson in the primer. The following familiar dialogue might go something like this:

Tim: (enthusiastically) Mrs. Mac, I really liked the story we read about Silly Sam! Sam was really dumb when he kept trading his clothes for all those silly things.

Mrs. Mac: I'm glad you liked the story Tim.

Tim: Can I take my book home and read that story to my Mom?

Mrs. Mac: I'm sorry Tim. I can't let you take your reader home. But why don't you take another book at the same level or one of those easy to read library books home. You know a lot of the words.

Tim: (reluctantly) O.K.

Narrator: Tim knows there are too many unfamiliar words in those other primers and library books to want to take one home to read to his mom. But he takes one anyway just to please Mrs. Mac.

Unknowlingly, Mrs. Mac may have done more to inhibit Tim's desire to do independent reading than to encourage it. In order for materials to be appropriate at the independent reading level, many reading authorities (2, 4, 6) suggest pupils recognize 97% or more of the vocabulary in context. This is particularly crucial at the beginning stages of reading instruction because at this early time most of the word attack skills haven't been taught, and therefore can't be applied in decoding. Thus, many phonetically regular words have to be treated temporarily as irregular or sight words until the phonic generalizations represented in the words are taught. (3) Beginning readers, therefore, have the highest need for materials with a controlled vocabulary.

THE BIG BASEBALL GAME
(Take Home Story)

The girls wanted to play baseball with the boys. Joe said, "You girls can not play the kind of baseball that boys can. Girls don't move fast. Girls are slow. Girls don't know what to do with the ball. You girls can't play ball with my friends or me. Every other boy says that too. So go home. Good-by."

"Come on girls," calls Suzy. "It is two to two. We want every run we can have." Kate was up. She drove a fast ball out of the baseball park for a home run. All together the girls said, "We did it! Three runs for the girls and two for the boys." The boys didn't say boo-hoo, but the boys did say, "We are good in football. Do you want to play that together?"

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Baseball day did come and it was one o'clock. All the girls were together looking at the baseball gloves and balls. Every boy was there to play too. Jay's mother was going to help. Kim's father calls out to the mothers and fathers who were there to look. "I am the ice cream man. I have every kind of ice cream for you to eat."

"Let's play ball," said Jay's mother. The boys were up. Ben looked at Ann. Ann gave Ben a high ball. He drove the ball out of the baseball park. He ran fast. It was a home run. The boys have one run. Then Bob was up. Ann gave Bob a slow ball. He too drove the ball up high for a home run. The boys have two runs.

Then Ann gave Hal three fast balls. Hal was out. Then she gave Izzy three slow balls and he didn't know what to do with the ball, so he was out too. Then Jay didn't drive the ball and he was out too. There were three outs and the girls were up. Suzy drove the baseball out of the ballpark for a home run and so did Kim. The girls have two home runs.

The girls didn't like what Joe said. So Mindy said, "My girlfriends and I love to play baseball together. We can play baseball like boys do. We can move fast and we do know what to do with the ball. I'll tell you what. Let's play together and see who does know all kinds of things in baseball. You boys are in for a big surprise. Wait and see."

Ann said, "I am not happy that the boys have two runs. What will we do? Where is Suzy? She is the one who can help. Here she comes on her bike with her glove. Come on Suzy, come fast. We are looking for you." The girls know that Suzy will know what to do. Suzy calls the girls together and says many things.

Sam was looking at his friends. Slowly he said to the girls, "Yes, we will play you in baseball. If you girls want to play, then be at the place in the park where we play baseball at one o'clock. We are all good at baseball, so look out." Together the girls said, "We will be there at one o'clock."

The problem with sending Tim home with a library book, even a simple one, is that most so-called, easy-to-read trade books have too many words that are not in the beginning reader's reading vocabuarly. Many of the little supplemental books that are designed to review and extend basic reading vocabularies do too much extending and too little reviewing of known words.

To provide word recognition practice, teachers also frequently have students read different basal readers of the same level to supplement the basic program. This practice may also result in some problems for the beginning reader. A study conducted by Barnard and DeGracie (1) revealed that of a total 1,778 different words introduced in grade one in eight major basic reading series, only 103 words were common to all the basic programs. Only 47% of the words were common to two or more series. Since beginning reading vocabularies seem to vary considerably, it is likely that students will encounter word recognition difficulties because of a lack of vocabulary match with their basic program.

Independent reading materials ideally should be those that have a high vocabulary match so that students can read with comfort and security free of errors.

WRITING TAKE HOME STORIES

Take Home Stories are one way to provide practice of any basic reading vocabulary in a different context. Each story uses only the controlled vocabulary of the words introduced up to and including the page or level indicated. Take Home Stories can be written to be used after completion of an entire basal reader, after a unit within a reader, or after specific stories or lessons. Fig. 1 displays the titles of the Take Home Stories and the pages in the Series r Primers after which each can be used. After the vocabulary is learned and each lesson is completed in the Primers, there is a Take Home Story. Two criteria need to be em-

Fig. 1
TAKE HOME STORIES TO ACCOMPANY
AMIGOS AND UPS AND DOWNS

AMIGOS

A DAY AT THE CARNIVAL
After P. 15

6. mouse
wants
friend
be
no
10. not
11. finds
high
12. slowly
13. find *
14. she
15. yes

18. woman
school
friends *
19. liked *
sang
20. gave
21. one
drove
was
day
22. said
23. old
want *
her
24. went
there
28. going
drive
29. work
here
if
32. lunchroom
33. works

THE FISHING TRIP
After P. 35

38. many
places
39. sometimes
gloves
books
lunches *
place *

MYSTERY OF THE RED UMBRELLA
After P. 41

43. know
his
other

WHEN I GROW UP
After P. 53

44. for
45. green
happy
were
46. looked *
saw
49. surprise
did
50. this
51. turtle
52. box

56. Izzy
Hal
Mindy
57. mother
ask
58. father
59. help
61. say
63. fast
ran
seen
as
gone
67. mailman
lizard
71. found
tell
wanted *
73. laughed

THE PET RACE
After P. 75

78. Debbie
Ann
rain *
that's
I'll
wait
80. Jay
81. hide
82. two
three
83. thing *
84. peek
86. again
move
87. didn't
let's
91. let *

ADVENTURE AT GREEN LAKE
After P. 91

UPS AND DOWNS

6. Joe
7. Sam
9. am
looking *
together
10. boo-hoo
11. play
ball
love
12. football
baseball
13. bike
slow *
14. good-by
16. o'clock
eat
ice
cream
every
18. kind
all
kinds *

THE BIG BASEBALL GAME
After P. 19

24. Grandma
days *
take
care
asked *
Minna
Myra
25. good *
fun
bikes *
27. played *
29. morning
cold
31. lunch *
cooks
pot
cook *
32. eggs
soup
35. playing *
when
36. think
today
37. cooked *
something *

THE BIKE RIDE
After P. 37

40. John's
bad
John *
frog
crayons
boat
41. Liza

AFTERNOON AT THE RED FROG
After P. 51

42. threw
garbage
45. afternoon
thought
46. break
make
47. windows
48. doorway

56. silly
Alice
put
shoes
coat
57. by
give
has
balls *
58. stop
61. called *
62. way
66. gold
cage
67. very
68. flew
away
70. back
egg *
71. without *
72. cracked
more
73. had

A BAD AFTERNOON FOR ALICE
After P. 73

74. Rosa
shadow
goes *
alone
puts *
quiet
thinks *
76. takes *
time
its *
78. how

THE WORD MAKER GAME
After P. 79

84. donkey
knows *
walking *
85. road
hot
money
86. gives *
87. water
himself
they
90. pushes

ROSA'S GARAGE SALE
At the End

ployed when writing Take Home Stories: 1) Only the vocabulary that students have been taught may be used. 2) All of the new vocabulary for the particular lesson should be included. For example, The Big Baseball Game may be read by students after completing page 19 of UPS AND DOWNS (Level 8-Primer). It includes a high concentration of all the words introduced from pages 6 - 19 and a review of any words taught prior to that.

ASSEMBLING THE TAKE HOME STORIES

Take Home Stories are duplicated on both sides of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. When folded, stapled, and cut according to the directions in Fig. 2, each story forms a little eight-page booklet students can take and read to their families at home.

USING TAKE HOME STORIES TO REINFORCE READING SKILLS

Frequently parents want to know how they can help their children at home with reading. The author has conducted numerous workshops for parents showing them techniques for using Take Home Stories to reinforce needed reading skills. Take Home Stories are an ideal tool because they are inexpensive, consumable, can be taken home, and most important, they contain the exact reading vocabulary the student is learning in the basal program.

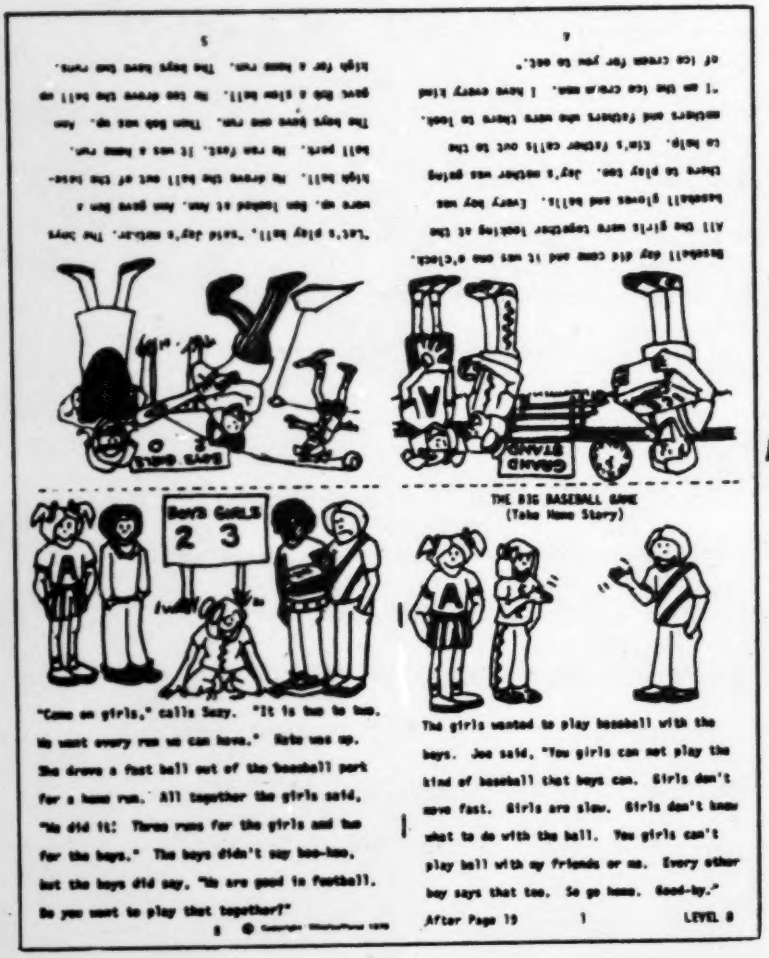
All of the following activities provide for maximum student involvement in that the Take Home Stories can be marked, underlined, circled, cut, manipulated, read and reread according to individual needs. Not all of the following activities should be done in any one lesson. Here each suggestion is merely illustrative of what can be done to focus on a particular skill area. The directions are written as a teacher or parent would give them to a student.

Word Recognition and Meaning

Page 1 - Circle the word ball every time you see it.

Fig. 2

DIRECTIONS FOR ASSEMBLING THE TAKE HOME STORIES


THE BIG BASEBALL GAME
(Take Home Story)
BOYS GIRLS
2 3
"Come on girls," calls Suzy. "It is two to two. We want every run we can have." Kate was up. She drove a fast ball out of the baseball park for a home run. All together the girls said, "We did it! Three runs for the girls and two for the boys." The boys didn't say boo-hoo, but the boys did say, "We are good in football. Do you want to play that together?"
The girls wanted to play baseball with the boys. Joe said, "You girls can not play the kind of baseball that boys can. Girls don't move fast. Girls are slow. Girls don't know what to do with the ball. You girls can't play ball with my friends or me. Every other boy says that too. So go home. Good-by."
After Page 19
1
LEVEL B

STEP 1
Fold first on the dotted lines so the dotted lines are on the outside.

STEP 2
Fold in half vertically so Page 1 is in front.

STEP 3
Staple on the staple markers.

STEP 4
Cut on the dotted lines to the spine of the booklet.

THE BIG BASEBALL GAME
(Take Home Story)
The girls wanted to play baseball with the boys. Joe said, "You girls can not play the kind of baseball that boys can. Girls don't move fast. Girls are slow. Girls don't know what to do with the ball. You girls can't play ball with my friends or me. Every other boy says that too. So go home. Good-by."
After Page 19
1
LEVEL B

- Put a box around the word that tells what the girls wanted to play. (baseball)
- Underline the word that means the opposite of fast. (slow)
- Put an X on the word that is what you say when you are leaving. (good-by)

Word Analysis

Page 2 - Circle the words that rhyme with low and grow. (Joe, so, and know)
- Put a box around the words that have the same ending sound as bat and mitt. (didn't, fast, what, wait)
- Underline the words that mean more than one. (girlfriends, things)
- Put an X on the word that is a short way of saying did not (didn't) and I will (I'll).

Recalling Details

Page 3 Underline the answers to these questions.
- Who was Sam looking at?
- Where did Sam tell the girls to go to play ball?
- What time will the girls have to be there?

Locating the Answer

Page 4 - Circle the sentence that tells what the girls were doing.
- Underline the sentences that tell what Kim's father calls out.

Visual Memory

Visual memory practice is helpful for students who confuse similar words and phrases. A number of phrases taken from the text on page 5 are written on cards. Each is exposed for three seconds and then removed from view. Then the student circles the phrase in his story that looks just like the one on the card.

Let's play ball.	drove the ball
a high ball	a slow ball

Sequence of Events

Being able to mark events on the story allows students to see more graphically the order in which those events happened.

Page 5 - Underline the sentence that tells how Ann pitched the ball to Bob.

- Underline the sentence that tells how Ann pitched to Ben.
- In your story put a number 1 by that event that came first and a number 2 by that event that happened next.

After doing that, numbering the events in order on a worksheet is an easier task.

Drawing Conclusions

Questions like the following require the student to go beyond the printed page and help develop inferential comprehension.

Page 6 - What kind of ball player do you think Suzy is? Why?

- What do you think the girls talk about when they are together?

Finding the Main Idea

Students select which statement tells the most about (the main idea) the information of Page 7.

A. Slow Balls For Izzy

B. Boys Are OUt and Girls Make Runs

C. A Home Run For Suzy

Using Context Clues

Every 6th or 7th word is marked out of a passage with a black felt tipped pen. The reader supplies a word in each blank space giving him/her practice in using semantic and syntactic cues to determine words and comprehend the selection. Graphophonic cues may also be used if the letters representing the initial sounds in the words are not deleted.

Critical Thinking

Questions similar to the following can be asked to encourage students to evaluate, judge, or do original thinking based on what they have read.

Page 8 - How did the boys feel after seeing the final score?

- Why do you think the boys suggested playing football?
- Do you think the girls will play? Why or why not?

SUMMARY

This paper has discussed Take Home Stories which students can make and take to share their reading success with their family. When used at the appropriate time, the stories can be read independently with no difficulty in that they incorporate the exact vocabulary of a basic reading program. Some of the problems beginning readers encounter in other independent reading materials such as easy-to-read trade books and different beginning basal readers were noted. Guidelines for writing and asembling the Take Home Stories into little eight-page booklets were described. A number of suggestions on how parents can use the Take Home Stories to reinforce needed reading skills were made.

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